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House of Burgess: Guide to social media 2012

By Rob Burgess

Tribune columnist

Social media basically rules communication for most Americans in 2012. It is the only thing that is real to some people. Being ignorant any longer is not advisable. So, using the most current monthly unique page view count via Mediabistro, I present to you my findings, and letter grades, on the top five most-visited social media networks:

5. Google+, 65 million:

Google+ is MySpace without the success first. It skipped immediately to the failure. Google+ is totally unnecessary at this point, but everyone is too

scared to deactivate yet in case we all have to jump ship from Facebook. It's really the bomb shelter for if Facebook explodes.

Grade: D

4. MySpace, 70.5 million:

Quick question: when was the last time you even signed into your MySpace page? There's a reason rapper C-Murder's official web page doubles as his MySpace profile: He's been serving a life sentence for second-degree murder for the last three years in Louisiana State Penitentiary. That's the last time I can remember actively using MySpace in any capacity: 2009. Everyone else has moved on. It's a ghost town. MySpace is the Dickensian "Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come" for Facebook if it's doesn't get its act together but quick.

Grade: D-

3. LinkedIn, 110 million:

A little more obtuse than it needs to be, but it also reflects the serious tone. Most people that consider themselves professionals at anything have a LinkedIn account. However, I rarely check mine unless I've got some serious maintenance to do.

Grade: B-

2. Twitter, 250 million:

I initially feared Twitter, but next to Facebook, it's downright classy. I use it as a repository of stray ideas, announcements, links to my work and for retweeting things I think are funny or interesting. And you can take it or leave it. No pressure. (My Twitter handle is @robaburg. Holla.) Also, in Twitter-speak you "follow" instead of Facebook's more personal term "friend." It's a little more truthful. Especially for celebrities and brands. (Example: Even though I don't "follow" Pepsi, we definitely aren't ever going to be "friends." We aren't hanging out later.) Also, if people don't like your output on Twitter, they really feel much more empowered to unfollow you than they are to unfriend you on Facebook. Facebook is saddled with a certain responsibility because it is the only means of connection for so many. Twitter is the free market incarnate.

Grade: A-

1. Facebook, 750 million:

It certainly feels like everyone is on Facebook. Along with Twitter, it's now part of my job. But Facebook has lapped itself jumping the shark so many times it's hard to tell where it started. I think of Facebook when I first joined it, and it seems almost quaint. And I'm not the only one noticing. Investors have been abandoning ship as fast as they can arrange it. I still check Facebook, but I'm almost always sorry I did. Most of it is now

garbage and self-generated spam. Even people I love and respect have begun constantly reposting pictures emblazoned with quotations of dubious veracity.

All. The. Time.

Others complain there's too many baby pictures on Facebook, but at least it's a real person doing something. Back in May, I made a concerted effort to step back from Facebook. I unhooked my Twitter and Instagram feed. I stopped posting music I like on Facebook, and now use Tumblr. Like Huey Lewis, I want a new drug.

Grade: D+

Final Verdict:

Facebook is ridiculous and putrid. Unfortunately, detachment is more difficult than ever. If you aren't on Twitter, get with the program. LinkedIn and Google+ seem like something that's worth it to have activated.

Everything else is trivial.

Like MySpace.

- Rob Burgess, Tribune night editor, may be reached by calling 765-454-8577 or via email at rob.burgess@kokomotribune.com.